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Date: 5/6/2018 1:20:20 PM
Subject: Opinion | 'Fed Up' ads reducing gun crimes

This is a great editorial by my colleague, Howard Robertson, about the effectiveness of focused deterrence. Through our reinvigorated Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) model, we are working with public safety partners to use proven methods to reduce the violent crime rate in Memphis, and we are beginning to see positive results. By our actions and our words, we must continue to send a clear message that there is a real consequence to victims, offenders, and the community for violent criminal behavior.

I look forward to continuing our participation in and support for this deterrence media campaign.

<https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2018/05/04/opinion-fed-up-ads-reducing-gun-crimes/574856002/>

Opinion | 'Fed Up' ads reducing gun crimes

Howard Robertson | Guest columnist 9:00 a.m. CDT May 4, 2018
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"Fed Up" Gun Campaign

City and State officials announces the "Fed Up" gun control campaign Monday morning. The campaign will bring tougher state penalties and possible federal prosecution for violent criminals in possession of a gun.

Mark Weber/The Commercial Appeal

Homicides in Memphis declined by 10 percent from 2016's record-setting year to 2017. Through the first quarter of 2018, homicides are down nearly 38 percent below 2017.

While it's not perfect, it's real progress. And these are not just percentage points, they're human lives -- on both ends of the gun.

About a year ago Trust Marketing & Communications signed a \$300,000 city contract with the City of Memphis. The initial contract was for a six-month comprehensive marketing campaign (including media costs) targeted to reach and affect perpetrators and potential perpetrators of gun crime.

At that point last year, the city basically was on track to equal or surpass the previous year's record in homicides. Violence, shootings and homicides dominated local TV newscasts and headlines.

Everybody seemed to be looking "side-eyed" at Mayor Jim Strickland, reminding him, "You campaigned on reducing crime, now show us something." So the mayor did his homework, talked to people and researched past efforts that were successful.

That's how he found the study from the University of Memphis Center for Community Criminology and Research.

Over a three-year period (2003-2005) the UofM conducted research on the media campaigns running during that time and produced a Project Safe Neighborhoods Media Campaign Impact Analysis.

This empirical research concluded:

- * The media campaign had a direct impact on reducing firearms crime.
- * The impact of the reduction due to the media campaign was statistically significant.
- * The deterrent impact disappeared as the media message faded.
- * During the time of the public awareness campaign, Memphis homicides dropped to the lowest level in 25 years.

Trust Marketing had helped realize those successes, so Mayor Strickland reached out to us. My team collaborated with the mayor's team, Operation Safe Community, and city, county and federal law enforcement officials.

The "Fed Up"<<https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/crime/2017/07/24/memphis-gun-violence-target-new-fed-up-campaign/504137001/>>" campaign was born out of a broad collaboration also including state lawmakers and the Memphis Crime Commission. The campaign works to proactively save lives of potential victims and potential perpetrators by utilizing a method called Focused Deterrence.

Messages of deterrence, especially highlighting bad consequences a perpetrators' actions could have, are directly communicated to potential offenders, primarily males 18-34 years old.

We don't talk about them; we speak real talk directly to them in their vernacular ("Don't lose your head, use your head mane.") and on their turf. Everybody else is quite literally eavesdropping.

We know that the messenger is as vital as the content of the message. The target audience responds stronger to someone authentic.

Jerald Trotter, the talent on the television commercial, is an ex-con who spent 12 years and 9 months in prison for a gun crime. He convincingly communicates the punishment and sentencing severity, having spent the time equivalent of somebody's life from first grade through freshman year of college, in prison.

According to The Trace (thetrace.org), an independent, nonpartisan newsroom reporting on America's gun violence crisis, "A recent study found that focused deterrence [when correctly implemented](https://www.thetrace.org/2016/08/violence-prevention-programs-effectiveness/), results in a roughly 20-60 percent reduction in shootings and killings."

As Mayor Strickland told the news media last year, "It works."

The sustained payoff, however, will be driven by taking our anti-gun violence messengers and messaging into high schools and middle schools. Four high schools are already scheduled this month.

The return on investment of taxpayer funds has yielded: lives saved, savings from the costs of years of incarceration, and even the savings of taxpayer dollars that subsidize emergency rooms and trauma centers that treat gunshot victims.

Is this an effective use of taxpayer money? You decide.

Howard Robertson is president and CEO of Trust Marketing and Communications.

9:00 a.m. CDT May 4, 2018

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